



July to
September 2016



Our website:
www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk
Ranger's Office
0115 921 5865

Issue 72

Friends Newsletter

Hurray! Summer is here (sort of!) and the park is filled with flowers and wildlife, as well as the usual people and dogs!

As the park continues to develop, the number of species seen continues to rise, joining the familiar ones—this year's cygnets are doing well so far.

A major new project is getting underway which should bring the old tree nursery into a new feature as an area for people to sit and enjoy a different part of the park.



The Sunday teas are continuing to surpass all expectations but more volunteers are urgently needed to enable this to continue. Details inside.

Another trip by Friends to Wytham Woods has taken place. As a relative newcomer I wanted to know more about this link and why it's become so important to the Friends, so I asked Zoe—and added this information to the article on the trip.

There have been sad losses to the park but also many gains—look inside to find out more, and see some of the photos that illustrate the story.

Anne Dealtry, Editor.

GIFT AID

I would like to say a huge “Thank you “ to Sue Wilding for taking on the mammoth task of setting up Gift Aid for the Friends. I know it has been very frustrating at times with long phone conversations with HM Revenue and Customs.

Also a big “Thank you” to Zoe for her help in devising a form to claim for the last 4 years of our annual Subscriptions. Unfortunately many failed the challenge of filling in the forms correctly!!

Sue has now processed nearly 200 forms plus one for the £500 donation in memory of John Antippa , and submitted the Gift Aid declaration form to HM Revenue. If they agree with our calculations we hope to receive around £1450.

Thank you all

Jean [Treasurer]



Please... help with Teas...

Sue and Dorothy would like to extend an appeal to all friends to ask if anyone is able to offer help with the fundraising Tea and Cake café usually held on the first and third Sunday of the month.

The Teas are the main fundraising activity of FORCP and are highly successful due to the efforts of a number of regular volunteers who carry out the varied roles involved in making the café work. However more volunteers are always needed especially as holidays, health issues and family can take away several volunteers at once!

To give you an idea of what is involved:

- Some people make cakes, bakes or savouries—the costs of these can be refunded and the bakes are often made in advance and frozen.
- Volunteers are needed on the Saturday afternoon for a couple of hours before the teas to obtain milk, get cakes ready and set up the room and kitchen before the event—there are usually at least 2 people involved in this.
- Volunteers are needed on the Sundays - volunteers can work whatever shifts suit them but people are needed from around 8am until about 3-4pm and roles include preparation, serving and washing/clearing up.
- Limited time, physical abilities or skills are no barrier -there is flexibility and guidance and training are available!

If you would like to help in any way please approach Sue directly or leave a message for her on the Rangers number or email countrypark@rushcliffe.org.uk



Project Tree Nursery



The old tree nursery, no longer in use for its original purpose, has been a bit of an eyesore at the park in recent times. It was ripe for 'redevelopment' so the Friends were asked to consider what could be done with the area and to plan the project.

The area is near the main car park entrance and therefore close to the facilities of the Education Centre, and very accessible for the staff at the business park who often walk over to the Park for their lunch breaks.

Although it is only at the planning stage a number of ideas have been put forward. After remaining saplings were removed, clearance work has been done. The hedge has been laid by Friends' specialist volunteers, and there was some hard graft from the Environmental Health team on their volunteering day to clear the area of junk and unwanted plant life. They did a fantastic job so our thanks are owed to them.



After a meeting of the Friends Wednesday volunteers, it was agreed to create a 'garden' with seating, possibly with some green roofing for shade and shelter, and to look at the other techniques which have been used in the Park to make the area attractive but natural. The established wildlife pond will stay and be fenced off to prevent safety issues, and the raised beds be brought back into use for planting.



Other ideas include planting native shrubs, creation of planters, mosaics and use of natural woods and barks.

DOG PROFILE—Tim, Dog Ranger. (Full name - Timmy Kelly)

How old are you, are you a particular dog breed, what's your background/family history?

I'm all Border Collie no matter what people might think and aged a venerable 14 years. I lived with a family that had five children until I was 5 months old. They were struggling to cope with a collie pup along with all the kids (one of which was allergic to me and another suffering from epilepsy).

I went to live with Chris after that who was also a bit allergic to me but soon got over it.

When did you start visiting the park?

I didn't visit the Park until Chris started volunteering here in 2007, he then started coming regularly on Fridays so I came along as well to help with all sorts of things including digging - lots of digging.

What do you most enjoy when you come to the park?

I particularly enjoy riding in the buggies at the park, especially in the rain when you get to drive through puddles which then necessitate a special high pitched bark at the splashing which I reserve for just such occasions!



What's your favourite toy?

I still enjoy rolling a football around but I do tend to trip over it these days (stupid legs). A barkly splash in a stream, shallow river or the sea is always good fun though.

What's your favourite natural thing at the park?

I enjoy all the wildlife at the park but often find lots of it in the wrong places. I am forever having to move gulls, crows, rooks and jackdaws back up into the air where they are supposed to be. There are some good sticks here too which are very nice to chew and the odd bit of rabbit poo.

Assuming that you are not allowed to eat cake, what's your favourite treat?

Chris doesn't let me have many rich treats these days (as he's mean) but I am still allowed chicken-wrapped hide chews which are always popular. I also really like spaghetti, not sure why - I just wish Chris would cook it more often!

Douglas, Dog Volunteer.

Hello, Friends, Dogs, Countrypersons,

As a newly trimmed dog I am starting to appreciate the warmer weather. It's particularly pleasing to be able to roll in the buttercups and come up yellow. Pulling Anne round the lake on my lead in pursuit of young moorhens is amusing. They love it really! One of our jobs this quarter is to fill up the Linger lakeside bird feeders. I guard the bird seed next to the workshop whilst Anne teeters precariously on a crate wielding a hook and trying not to drop the feeders on Jill's head or vice versa. It's very entertaining and makes me bark.

I've been to several activities at the park recently. We enjoyed the Bark for Life walk where dogs walked their owners round the park to raise money for Cancer Research. I was a bit tired and didn't get up in time to do the walk but I cheered on my friends Barney and Ted who did do it, and we watched the dog show and patronised the stalls, as well as having tea and cake courtesy of the Guides.



I clear up any cake spillages and amuse passing small children by grinning at them through the glass doors in the Education Room.

I'm a bit bored with the rain from the past few weeks—much as I enjoy paddling in the puddles and watching large yellow Retrievers jumping in the mud bath specially created for them up near Memorial Avenue, I'd rather it didn't rain all day every day.

Since Anne decided to bring back the idea of a People 'Profile' article, I thought I'd create a new Dog Profile article as I'm sure you'd agree that some of the Park dog regulars are very interesting characters. I've decided to start with Dog Ranger, Tim, because he told me to, he's my boss, and he's bigger than me.

Douglas



Lib's Log

With the onset of spring, I commenced a new season in my first year as a Friend. Having spent the winter months on hedge laying, I soon discovered many other areas of the Park to be maintained and other activities to get involved in.

Working with Ranger Keith, a small team set to work one morning on stuffing netting with barley straw to make huge sausage shaped structures which were then placed in the water around the edge of the lake. I never did get to learn the technical term for the 'sausages' but did learn their purpose was to clear the pond of algae etc in a very natural way (rather than use chemicals).

The woods have been getting some attention along their borders, with teams clearing back the overhanging branches and removing unwelcome saplings which interfere with the grass mowing. In Gibbies Wood, the paths and the maze have been receiving a new covering of wood chip. Collecting numerous loads of wood chip by buggy offered an opportunity to improve my buggy driving skills, including reversing, under the watchful eye of new seasonal ranger Ann (or did she have her hands over her eyes?). Jill, perhaps eager to see Ann survive into her third working day at the Park, took over from Ann as my co-driver just as it started to rain slightly. Searching and fumbling for the windscreen wiper, I pulled a lever which adjusted the steering wheel! This caused some amusement as Jill and I contemplated whether the buggy had an ejector seat.



I was introduced to another area of woodland and water when I helped with the Easter Egg Hunt and Den Building days, and the school group activity days involving den building, pond dipping and mini beast hunting. Hidden away behind no access signs is the educational area with lots of fallen branches suitable for children or mini beasts (anyone know the difference?) to build little houses. There are custom built ponds where the children can search for freshwater invertebrates and amphibians.

The sun beat down on Bill and I, one morning (honest, it really did) as we restored the net house protecting the berry bushes. Then, as mid-day loomed and with perspiration covering our weary brows, we were joined by some other volunteers who wanted in on some action. Armed with spades but no shades, we dug holes for new berry bushes. Mad dogs and Englishmen! I attended the dawn chorus walk and found it interesting; as was my brief involvement in checking the Robin's nest in the Tree Nursery. A few months back I had difficulty locating the Tree Nursery; anticipating rows of healthy saplings I discovered an area with trees at the other end of their lives; fallen and converted into fence poles, pallets, railway sleepers, logs etc. A few weeks ago, the Friends congregated in that same area, transformed by clearing, to discuss ideas for development and I look forward to being involved in that project.

Sue and Dorothy approached me one day asking if I had any ideas how we could attract more helpers for the Sunday café. As the words 'you have to approach people directly, not as a blanket appeal' tripped from my tongue, I realised I had ensnared myself. So it was I found myself on the rota for the morning café following the dawn chorus walk. Rather than go home after the walk and come back later, I made myself useful in the kitchen, along with Dorothy, cooking tea cakes. Yes, to me any food preparation involving heat is cooking, and unfortunately, destined to go wrong somehow. I tripped the switch on the toaster whilst preparing the last of the teacakes. This cut off the electricity feeding the water heater for the morning café and it wasn't until Jenny and I failed miserably to dissolve hot chocolate powder in tepid water that we realised something was wrong. Thanks to Ranger Chris for his speedy response in getting the power back on.

Despite the hiccup it was a pleasant experience working with Jenny and I got to meet Friends who don't normally attend on Wednesday.



It was good to help those long term 'regulars' who run the café week after week and raise so much money for the projects on the Park - so, I will add my name to the rota. that's if I'm allowed back!



Finally, I attended my first Friends' meeting. I feel fortunate that Friends can contribute ideas toward the future of the Park, such how the Tree Nursery is developed. The meeting also provided a greater insight into the other essential tasks that keep the wheels turning, for example holding meetings with planners, councillors, and sourcing new equipment.

To close, I should like to say congratulations to Rosemary on her award. She has been my mentor in recent months - showing me the ropes and inviting me to help her with a survey of the lake - another new and enjoyable project for me. I am pleased her dedication to hedge laying has been recognised.

Lib

Rosemary Dove has been awarded the Smith Cup for the 2015-16 season. Rosemary although only a recent volunteer has been stalwart in her attendance on the work days, and more, and spent many hours over the Winter learning and applying hedgelaying techniques to great effect.



Norman Ecob

It is with sadness that we learned of the passing of Norman Ecob who became involved with The Friends during our first project, the Community Garden, and created the Owl Mosaic.



A talented artist & photographer ..



Woodcarver



....with a droll sense of humour; he went on to become Chairman.

Margaret and Jean.



Morris Turner, Sadly Missed.

A few memories of Morris at Rushcliffe Country Park.

Morris volunteered when work was starting on the country park. He went practically every Saturday and undertook various types of work from hedge laying, coppicing, cutting back reed beds. Hedge laying in the winter months, often in very icy conditions.

Mick (ranger) caught small birds in netting in order to ring them. He was licensed to ring them and we helped make notes. We helped to catch and ring cygnets and we have a photo of Morris sitting the wrong way round on the cygnet. He should have had the head at the back so that he could ring the feet at the front of him!

In February 2004 the Rangers plus volunteers helped to dig out the pond in Gibbies wood, this was quite hard work as you can imagine.

We did willow weaving and Morris helped to knock the stakes in the ground while others did the weaving.

When Margaret Lawson retired from being chairman of the friends, Morris was elected. He found the job very rewarding. He thoroughly enjoyed working on various projects and socialising with the other volunteers.

There is a silver birch tree in his memory, in the memorial wood.

Audrey Turner



And there's more...

Smiff's Corner



Our thoughts of Gordon have now been focused on an area of the park which is to be known as Smiff's Corner.

The area is to the left of the top of Memorial Avenue - it has hedges which Gordon was involved in laying during his many years building his countryside skills. New to the area are young trees funded by Celia and a bench will be placed there in memory of Gordon.

There are plans for wildflowers to be encouraged. And cutting back the area has already resulted in a pretty flush of new growth. We look forward to spending time there.



Artex's Arborial Endeavour.

The well known locally based company Artex have recently expressed an interest in furthering their links with the park and an area has been set aside for a new wood which they and their employees will support. There were many queries from park users as a fence went up in an open area of the Kite Field but this is to be the new woodland which will protect the Kite Field from some of the more extreme elements of the weather. The trees will be planted at the appropriate time in Autumn. The hedging can now be watered more easily thanks to the very welcome gift of a water bowser.



This week:

Ann Walters, New Seasonal Ranger.

What other jobs or roles have you had?

- I completed 30 years as a police officer. My most recent role was as Beat Manager for Ruddington. I also spent 3 years in the civil service working for the Job Centre.

What else do you enjoy doing?

- I like walking with my dog Murph who is a collie—some of you may have met him. I also like riding, gardening and hedgehogs—I have hedgehog plans for the Park!

What was your first involvement with the Park?

- I patrolled the Country Park when I was a beat officer—it was my favourite place to patrol.

What do you most enjoy about being at the Park?

- Just being here and seeing the beautiful trees and wildlife.



PEOPLE PROFILE



What would you most like to see at the Park?

- I'd love to see a Teddy Bears' Picnic area.

What's your favourite natural thing at the park?

- I like the wild flowers

As the Friends specialise in tea and cake, what's your favourite cake?

- I don't really like cake! I do like a few crisps though.

And from the Friends, what do we respect Ann for?

- Her thorough knowledge of the park and it's activities
- Her enthusiasm for the park
- Her ability to deal with anyone, and anything that happens at the Park, calmly and competently.

John's Jottings -

Wildlife at the park update from John Elwell

My visits to the Park have been infrequent this quarter, but I have received a wealth of information from others on the Park's wildlife. Starting with flowers, we have a good show of orchids around the lake and elsewhere, and a recent count by Mick found 457 Southern Marsh Orchids and 49 Bee Orchids. Bill identified a new flowering plant species for the Park, by the lakeside: *Sisymbrium loeselii*, known as Small Tumbleweed Mustard, False London-rocket or Tall Hedge Mustard. The species is allelopathic, meaning that it produces chemicals that inhibit the germination of seeds of other species around it. Whether this leads to the species being invasive I am not sure, but it is worth keeping an eye on the plant to see if it starts to take over.

It is always great to see an increase in butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies during spring and early summer, ready to provide interest during high summer when birds can be surprisingly quiet, having stopped singing, and are hard to spot in dense foliage. Brimstone and Peacock butterflies were appearing as early as mid-March, and by now most of the regular species of butterfly are back. Dragonflies and damselfies are also around, including a female Broad-bodied Chaser seen on 7th June. Mick discovered an Oak Beauty moth on the building, a new species for the Park, and on the mini-beast hunt on 27th May a Click Beetle from the genus *Melanotus* was found, also a first for the Park.



Concerning birds, the Park has been alive with the usual assortment of migrants, including Barn Swallow (first arrival seen 30th March), Reed Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff. A small flock of Yellow Wagtails was seen by the lake on 18th April. The Mute Swans have produced seven cygnets, which appeared on 12th May and are still going strong.

Why Wytham?

When I first became a volunteer and Friend at the park 18 months ago I heard a number of references to trips to 'Wytham.' I wasn't quite sure what this was but then experienced the excitement of people who were preparing to go off on a trip there (like a bunch of school kids on their first geography field trip, they were!)

When it was mentioned that the latest Wytham trip would be happening just before this newsletter was produced and an article would be forthcoming, I asked Zoe for more information.

So... apparently in 2008 or thereabouts Dorothy mentioned to Zoe that she was a bit sad that she'd only ever seen badgers locally knocked over on the roads and would really like to see a live one. Zoe had contacts with staff working at Wytham Woods in Oxfordshire, notably Nigel Fisher.

Wytham is an Oxford University conservation research site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It contains calcareous grassland, around 416 hectares of ancient and secondary semi-natural woodland, and around 600 hectares of experimental farmland. One of the major works carried out there is the study of badgers as there is a considerable population. A Badger Watching week was coming up.

And the rest, one might say, is history. Each year a group of FRCP volunteers heads down there for a few days to camp or B and B, and carry out conservation work, and a strong rapport has been achieved between both the people in the group that goes, and Rushcliffe Country Park and Wytham Woods. Meanwhile, Nigel's son Tristan, who is now at university in Nottingham, is a volunteer at Rushcliffe Country Park.



Anne.

And so, to the most recent trip....

Wytham, the June trip.

This was my first trip to Wytham Woods and it was everything people said it would be. The scenery is majestic at times, or bewildering if you are not sure which way you are going. It feels like green nature in the raw.

There were wonderful views over the countryside - where we were installing a gate and sheep netting - luckily there was a man with some large machinery to install the posts. Lambs were going to live in that field to thrive in that wonderful meadow.

On the third day I went with Jean, Kate and Mary into the forest to look for posts bearing yellow paint and numbered discs. These are at strategic points in the Forest and are photographed for the research into how the Forest is changing. So, we scrambled through brambles, nettles and ferns... were we set back by these? Definitely not! Following a compass, and with a grid to work from we found far more than the last guy who went to find them.



We did find time to be social too - Mary introduced us to the Banana Game (!!) we had a beautiful meal in the village of Wolvercote, and there's an interesting story about Roger and his skill in reversing his car.... Ask him about it (oh, and it's been fixed now.)

As we were thinking of leaving the bar there was a thunderstorm which made sure we had to stay there (fretting in case the people who were camping lost their tents) Thank goodness when they got back all was safe and dry.

I had a great time and will certainly go again.

Brigit

At Wytham this time were Zoe, Roger, Tracey, Jill, Sara, Helen, Jean, Kate, Mary, Jan, and Brigit.





Bees and Ducks

If you've been carefully studying the ground in May at the Country Park you may have spotted little mounds and holes in patches of bare compacted soil.

These are being created by solitary 'mining' bees which excavate a burrow in which they place a store of pollen and nectar with each egg. The larvae develop underground and hibernate as pupa over winter.

The males bees can usually be seen swarming around the burrows waiting to mate with the females who are busy digging the burrows.



Those of you feeding the ducks at Rushcliffe Country Park this year are almost certain to have seen our cob swan chasing the little white Aylesbury duck across the lake. He seems to have taken a particular dislike to this harmless little fellow and has pulled a few of his feathers out before.

On the last day of May things got a bit more serious. The cob had pinned the Aylesbury down in the reeds and was furiously hitting him with his wings, pecking at him and trying to drown him.

Ann (our new seasonal ranger) managed to chase the swan off and, although he didn't look it at first, the duck was still alive.

He really couldn't stay at the park after this and needed a bit of time to recuperate (and grow a fair few feathers back!). A kindly vet has taken him in to check him over and keep him with her ducks while he recovers from his ordeal. Hopefully he'll recover soon and be released elsewhere - we just hope he doesn't come back to Ruddington. for his own good!



Dawn(ish) Chorus Walk 2016

Now, I'm pretty sure I told everybody - '1st of May - 6 am, Dawn Chorus Walk'. You really need to write things down if you're going to forget. It was wonderful to see the insomniac few of you that did arrive for this year's dawn chorus walk though. It was bright and a little frosty but mercifully dry that morning so we were already well ahead of last year's rainy dawn.

The dry weather (and slightly later start time) seemed to attract more interest this year - that or the appeal of the expertise of 'master birder' John Elwell, who had kindly agreed to help me out this year. Sixteen of us in total assembled for the amble of avian aural appreciation, a full four times the 2015 attendance!

John gave us a brief, but interesting introduction and we set off to see (hear) who was about. The little Dunnock who had been singing proudly right outside the office since January took one look at our group and remained embarrassingly mute but our Song Thrush by the bee woodland was in fine voice.

Robins and Willow Warblers were heard along the lakeside woodlands and everyone was treated to an excellent view of a Reed Bunting performing his creaky, four-note song before we scanned the reed bed for the insane rantings of the Reed Warblers. These seemed to be deeper in, but a Blackbird gave us a beautiful solo from atop a high tree at the back of the lake.

The rear of the lake also started to yield the amazingly strident songs of Wrens and the gentle cooing of Wood Pigeons while the far side gave us a better opportunity to catch the Reed Warblers, the two-note 'see-saw' of the Great Tit and the angry scolding of the Blue Tit. A Dunnock finally gave a performance from the hedgerow but was far too shy for photos.

Proceeding to the edge of the Park we added Rooks (a nice contrast to help us fully appreciate the other birds), Pheasant, Green Woodpecker and Chaffinch to the tally and finally woke up the late-rising Chiffchaff. He busied himself, shouting his own name while we scanned the treetops, tracking him down.

By the newly-laid hedge overlooking Gotham we heard the scratchy ditty of the Whitethroat who also launched himself from the telegraph wires in short bursts of display flight. In search of further artistes we progressed to the level-crossing where Goldfinches were found to be chattering their tinkly melodies.

A short excursion into the rear of Gibbie's wood gave us chance to pause a while in the glades and listen to a fine woodland chorus including nice clear renditions of *speededupblackbirdsong* from the Blackcap, before we wandered back toward the Visitor Centre for tea and teacakes (thank you ladies for the impromptu, early opening of the café).

Thinking our entertainment was at an end for the morning we relaxed in the café discussing the feathered songsters we had and hadn't seen when a Sparrowhawk suddenly alighted on the bird feeder right outside the window! A dramatic end to an exciting, enjoyable and informative morning - that I expect to see you all at next year!

Chris



Work Days

The Friends' work days will be held every Wednesday and also Mondays. Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.
New volunteers always welcome

Registered Charity No 1079665

Chris likes to do a bit of watering now and then.



Name that dog!



He is Murph and belongs to Ann, new seasonal Ranger.

Dates for your Diary 2016

Linger Teas Wed 6 and 20 July

Café Sun 3 and 17 July

Linger Teas Wed 3 and 17 Aug

Café Sun 7 and 21 Aug

Linger Teas Wed 7 and 21 Sept

Café Sun 4 and 18 Sept

FoRCP Meeting 14 Sept 1pm RCP

Wytham Trip 5-9 September